

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGUI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 054583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, CT

SUBJECT: GEORGES BOKASSA SCUTTLES U.S. VISIT

REF: BANGUI 264 ET AL

1. GEORGES BOKASSA AND WIFE ARRIVED WASHINGTON EVENING MARCH 10 AND WERE MET AT AIRPORT BY COUNTRY OFFICER AND ESCORT-INTERPRETER. CAR EMBOFFS ALSO ON HAND FOR ARRIVAL AND ACCOMPANIED THEM TO HOTEL. OVER DRINKS IN ROOM AT WATERGATE HOTEL, ESCORT-INTERPRETER WITH COUNTRY OFFICER EXPLAINED TO GEORGES AND WIFE FACILITATIVE NATURE OF DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE AND INFORMED COUPLE OF TENTATIVE PROGRAM, EXPLAINING THAT THEY WOULD BE BROUGHT TO DEPARTMENT ON FOLLOWING MORNING TO ARRANGE SPECIFIC ITINERARY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR WISHES. COUPLE SEEMED PLEASED WITH PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAD BEEN MADE AND EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST IN GOING TO HOUSTON SPACE CENTER, DISNEYLAND AND GRAND CANYON.

2. FOLLOWING MORNING, ESCORT-INTERPRETER ARRIVED AT HOTEL TO BRING COUPLE TO DEPARTMENT AND FOUND GEORGES AND WIFE WAITING IN LOBBY. GEORGES IMMEDIATELY INFORMED ESCORT THAT HE WAS CHECKING OUT OF HOTEL AND DEPARTING FOR NEW YORK WHERE HE WOULD DELIVER HIMSELF TO THE CARE OF IVORY COAST MISSION THERE. ESCORT SUMMONED COUNTRY

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OFFICER TO HOTEL WHERE, ACCOMPANIED BY CU/AF DEPUTY

DIRECTOR WACHOB, THEY DISCUSSED PROBLEM WITH A HIGHLY VEXED GEORGES.

3. GEORGES, WHO IN BAD MOOD, SAID HE HAD PASSED DIFFICULT NIGHT IN HOTEL BECAUSE HE WAS UNABLE TO USE TELEPHONE OR (ON ARISING ABOUT 4A.M.) TO ORDER ANYTHING TO EAT DUE TO LANGUAGE BARRIER. HE THEN ADDED REAL REASON FOR ABRUPT DEPARTURE TO NEW YORK WAS THAT SINCE IVORY COAST HAD FINANCED TRIP, PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY WOULD BE ANGRY IF ITINERARY WAS PLANNED BY DEPARTMENT INSTEAD OF IVORY COAST MISSION. WHEN ASKED WHY GOCAR HAD REQUESTED EMBASSY TO FACILITATE TRIP AND MAKE PLANS IF THIS WAS THE CASE, GEORGES FIRST SAID HE DID NOT KNOW GOCAR HAD DONE THIS. WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS OWN DISCUSSIONS WITH U.S. EMBASSY OFFICERS IN BANGUI REGARDING TRIP, GEORGES IMPLIED THAT EMBASSY HAD MADE MOST OF THE PLANS WITHOUT HIS CONCURRENCE. GEORGES WAS THEN ASKED IF IVORY COAST MISSION WOULD ARRANGE ITINERARY AND PROVIDE ESCORT-INTERPRETER. HE RESPONDED BY SAYING HE DID NOT KNOW BUT THAT IN ANY EVENT HE NO LONGER DESIRED TO SEE UNITED STATES, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ROUNDTRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO. HE ADDED THAT DEPARTMENT COURTESIES AND CU'S USE OF VOLUNTEERS IN EACH CITY WOULD BE OF LITTLE VALUE IF WE UNABLE TO ARRANGE FOR HIM TO BE GREETED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS IN MANNER HE ACCUSTOMED. HE HAD EARLIER TOLD COUNTRY OFFICER THAT WHEN HE VISITS RIO HE IS TO BE RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL.

4. GEORGES' PIQUE EXACERBATED BY FACT HE UNABLE TO WALK INTO BANK AND EASILY CASH CHECK FOR DOLLARS 25,000. HE ALSO SAID TRAVEL IN US IS TOO DANGEROUS AND REFERRED TO IT AS "COUNTRY OF BANDITS". CAR CHARGE ALSO ATTEMPTED TO TALK GEORGES INTO REMAINING IN WASHINGTON AND CONTINUING WITH PROGRAM ARRANGED BY DEPARTMENT, BUT THIS WAS ALSO TO NO AVAIL. AT GEORGES' INSISTENCE, HE WAS CHECKED OUT OF HOTEL AND DEPARTED IN EMBASSY LIMOUSINE FOR NEW YORK,

TELLING ESCORT THAT HIS SERVICES NOT NEEDED. HE INDICATED HE WOULD DEPART FROM NEW YORK FOR BRAZIL.

5. COMMENT: GEORGE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERING FROM CULTURAL
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SHOCK AND FRUSTRATED BY NOT BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE. HE ALSO FATIGUED AND IRRITABLE AND HAD REMARKED UPON ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON THAT BUSINESS DEALINGS IN EUROPE HAD BEEN TAXING. HIS WIFE OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED AT CHANGED PLANS BUT SAID SHE UNABLE TO REASON WITH GEORGES. HOWEVER, ALL CONVERSATIONS WITH GEORGES WERE POLITE AND PROPER AND, ONCE IT WAS DETERMINED THAT HIS MIND WAS FIRMLY SET, DEPARTMENT OFFICERS MADE NO ATTEMPTS TO PREVAIL

AGAINST HIS WILL.

6. DEPARTMENT SUGGESTS EMBASSY MAY WISH TO HEAD OFF ADVERSE REACTION BY GOCAR AND PRESIDENT BOKASSA BY DELIVERING AIDE-MEMOIRE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY EMPHASIZING HIGHLIGHTS PARAS 2 AND 3 AND EXPLAINING THAT VISIT ABORTED ENTIRELY AT GEORGES' REQUEST.

7. NO MEDIA COVERAGE WILL BE PROVIDED. INGERSOLL

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